

Confederacy is dead, and so is its money

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—For many years our family has owned a \$100 bill issued by the state of Louisiana on March 10, 1863, in Shreveport. Family legend has it that the bill was acquired by my great-great-grandfather who was a lieutenant in the Confederate army. What might this rarity be worth? The serial number is 2650. K.N., Chicago.

A—Over the years, businessmen have reproduced scores of bills that were printed originally during the Civil War. The replicas usually are made on crinkled, yellow paper for sale as souvenirs.

Experts say the \$100 bill you describe [with serial number 2650] is one such worthless copy. If it were genuine, it might retail for \$15 or more, depending on condition.

Louisiana issued several types of bills during the war to support the Confederate cause; denominations ranged from 25 cents to \$100.

Q—Help! Several silver dollars in our safe-deposit box are covered with green crud. They were fine six years ago, the last time we looked at them. How could this happen? We had washed the coins and wrapped them in plastic for protection. A.Y., Buffalo Grove.

A—You probably used plastic made of polyvinyl chloride [PVC], which slowly corrodes coins containing copper [silver dollars are 90 percent silver and 10 percent copper]. You should take your hoard to a coin dealer for advice on how to remove the slime; some experts recommend the use of acetone or a neutral solvent that won't cause further damage.

Incidentally, many hobby shops sell coin holders made of inert [and PVC-free] materials. The pros use such holders for long-term storage.

Q—I have two quarters from the 1800s that are part of a bracelet. Are they valuable? O.M., Chicago.

A—Coins usually are bent, holed or otherwise mutilated when made into jewelry, greatly lowering their numismatic value. Nevertheless, your bracelet might be a keepsake to a jewelry collector, especially if it is an antique.

Several dealers will be selling their wares today at the annual show of the Sauk Trail Stamp and Coin Club. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Chicago Heights Park District Building near the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 30 and Chicago Road in Chicago Heights. Admission is free.